UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

In re:

Docket #1:15-cv-04091-

BROWN, KAREN, et al., : PKC-GWG

Plaintiffs, :

- against -

THE CITY OF NEW YORK, et al., : New York, New York

April 29, 2019

Defendants. :

-----:

PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

THE HONORABLE JUDGE GABRIEL W. GORENSTEIN, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT MAGISTRATE JUDGE

APPEARANCES:

For Plaintiffs: LEVENTHAL LAW GROUP, P.C.

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INDEX

E X A M I N A T I O N S

Re- Re- Witness Direct Cross Direct Cross

None

EXHIBITS

Exhibit Voir Number Description ID In Dire

None

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1
                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
             THE CLERK:
                         In the matter of Brown v. The City of
   New York, Docket No. 15-cv-4091.
 3
             Counsel, state your names for the record, please.
 4
             MR. JASON LEVENTHAL: Jason Leventhal for Karen
 5
 6
   Brown.
           Good afternoon, your Honor.
 7
             MR. JOSHUA MOSKOVITZ: Joshua Moskovitz, also for
 8
    the plaintiff, Karen Brown. Good afternoon, your Honor.
 9
             MS. ANGHARAD WILSON: Angharad Wilson for the
10
    defendants. Good afternoon, your Honor.
11
             HONORABLE GABRIEL W. GORENSTEIN: All right, so I
12
    have the two letters, Dockets 217 and 223. I think it will
13
   help me, whoever's speaking for plaintiffs, just to perhaps
14
    go through what you view as the lacunae in the affidavits.
15
             But there was one thing that made me think I could
16
    short-circuit this a little bit, which was in your
17
    footnote, that you want to be assured that this is the
18
    efforts that were made to do the things that are described
19
    and there aren't any other efforts they're not telling you
20
    about; is that fair, is that what you were looking for?
21
             MR. LEVENTHAL: That's fair, Judge, yes.
22
             THE COURT: Because, you know, I think if they're
23
    giving an affidavit on a topic, we can assume that's going
24
    to be the limit of the information they would be allowed to
25
    offer in response to any motion on that topic.
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1
                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
    can't -- you know, they can't start saying, "Well, we made
 3
    these other efforts." I mean, that's what the affidavits
 4
   are about.
             So, I mean, I can -- you know, I can rule that
 5
 6
    that's my ruling is that this is everything and they'll be
 7
   precluded from offering new evidence on that topic, if it
 8
   helps. Is that going to solve some of it, maybe?
 9
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Judge, I think it solves all of it
10
    except for the issue of the preservation hold and whether
11
    the City issued a hold or not.
12
             THE COURT: And now we're talking about tapes or
13
    something else?
14
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Well, it would be -- we assume it
15
    would be a general preservation hold that would have
16
    affected the tapes and the Javier Fernandez notes.
17
             THE COURT: Okay, so in terms -- the preservation
18
   hold, it seems to me, matters for a spoliation argument,
19
    right?
20
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Yes. And it also matters for the
21
    failure to timely disclose --
22
             THE COURT: That's where I'm wondering about that
   because let's -- I'm not saying it happened like this --
23
24
   but let's say you ask on Day 1 for a certain document.
25
    Day 30 they produce things without the document they were
```

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1
                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
    supposed to get. And then three years later they produce
 3
    the document. Okay? So you've been you've been prejudiced
    to some degree by that. But what does it matter whether
 4
    the reason it came up three years later was something
 5
 6
    internal did or did not happen vis-à-vis a preservation
 7
   hold? I mean, it's three years late. Is their argument
 8
    going to be different if they did a preservation hold?
 9
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Will the argument be different if
10
    they did a preservation hold? I think it would be, Judge.
11
    And the reason --
12
             THE COURT: I should have phrased it differently,
13
   because they're not talking about a preservation -- you can
14
    remain standing -- I'm addressing you. Let me phrase it
15
    differently. They come in, and they say whatever they say
16
    here about how it came about. They don't reference a
17
    preservation hold specifically as I -- or they don't
    reference a special litigation hold. So you will then say
18
19
    it came three years late. And maybe your fear is they'll
20
    say, "Oh, we issued a hold and then someone didn't obey
21
    it." But they won't be able to say that because it's not
22
    in here.
23
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Our argument would be that if they
24
    did not issue a -- well, first, if they had issued a
25
   preservation hold, we believe the documents would have been
```

1 PROCEEDINGS 2 timely produced. 3 THE COURT: But you are free to make that 4 argument. You are free to say, "You know what, there's no 5 excuse for this. All they had to do was tell this person 6 or that person, and none of this would have happened -- to 7 preserve any documents relating to the incident -- and none of this would have happened." You are going to be 8 9 completely free to make that argument, right? 10 MR. LEVENTHAL: We will. But right now it's 11 questionable whether a litigation hold was implemented or 12 not. We've asked them to stipulate that it wasn't, and 13 they refused to. 14 THE COURT: Okay. But if they're limited to 15 what's in here, then they're not going to be able to 16 suddenly come up and say, "Well, we had a litigation hold 17 of some particular kind, " I guess. 18 MR. LEVENTHAL: Yes, Judge. But I suppose if 19 there was a litigation hold so the City, through the law 20 department or the comptroller's office, had a system in 21 place that appropriately preserved evidence when they were 22 aware that litigation was imminent, so there was a 23 litigation hold, and then somehow the NYPD through, we 24 don't know, negligence, gross negligence, willful conduct, 25 did not do anything in response to that litigation hold, I

```
1
                          PROCEEDINGS
 2
   think our arguments would be different.
 3
             THE COURT: Okay, so your thought would be if
 4
    there would be some element of willfulness, I suppose,
    if -- and, again, it's one big entity, the City -- if
 5
 6
    there was some litigation hold that some employee of the
 7
    City disobeyed and allowed something to get destroyed,
 8
    that's the theory?
 9
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Or if the NYPD had no system in
10
   place to properly preserve evidence that was subject to a
11
    litigation hold.
12
             THE COURT: Well, now we're back to what I said,
13
    which is you're going to be free to argue, you know, they
14
    didn't do what they had to do to make sure these notes
15
    weren't -- it's the notes that were destroyed, right?
16
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Yes.
17
             THE COURT: Okay. They didn't do what they had
18
    to do to ensure the notes were not destroyed.
19
   has now said it did, I -- you said everything you did that
    would prevent those notes from being destroyed; I mean, is
20
21
    it all in here?
22
             MS. WILSON: Yes, that's correct, your Honor.
23
             THE COURT: All right, so they said everything
24
    they've done.
25
             And then I'm still back to where I am, which is
```

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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
 2
    you're free to argue that wasn't enough.
 3
             MR. LEVENTHAL: One moment, Judge?
             THE COURT: Yes, sure. Take your time.
 4
             MR. LEVENTHAL: So, Judge, the only issue is, as
 5
 6
    you described, is the ability for us to explore, discover
 7
    whether there was any evidence that this was willful or
 8
    not.
 9
             THE COURT: Okay, so let me just think about
10
    that issue. So -- but I guess -- all right, so the theory
    is that maybe there's a litigation hold; they've elected
11
12
    not to tell us about it; and then if someone at the NYPD
13
    knew about that hold and then disobeyed it, that that
14
    would create a different argument regarding spoliation,
15
    rather than if they just failed to, you know, negligently,
16
    I guess, failed to do anything to preserve the documents,
17
    that's the theory?
18
             MR. LEVENTHAL: I think so, yes, your Honor.
19
             THE COURT: Okay, Ms. Wilson, do you want to
20
    address that?
21
             MS. WILSON: Well, first I would just say that in
22
    Detective Fernandez's declaration, as well as in his
    testimony at his deposition, he did both describe what his
23
24
    general practice was with the preservation of handwritten
25
   notes that he might have taken.
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PROCEEDINGS
1
2
             Additionally, I'd also like to point out that,
3
   although he did say that he took down some type of
4
   information regarding the pedigree of these individuals,
   he was unable to recall whether or not there were any
5
6
   substantive notes that he took at all, either in his
7
   deposition or in his declaration.
8
             Regardless, I think that it's clear from
   Detective Fernandez's declaration that he was never asked
9
10
   to turn these notes over until I believe it was February
11
   of 2019. And we would argue that the plaintiff --
12
             THE COURT: Hold on. And where is that in the
13
   affidavit that makes that clear?
14
             MS. WILSON: I'm sorry, your Honor, let me
15
   iust --
16
             THE COURT: Take your time.
17
             MS. WILSON: It's in paragraph 10 of --
             THE COURT: Right. "I have not been asked --"
18
19
             Well, this sort of answers your litigation-hold
20
   question, which is -- I mean, so you're saying is it the
21
   case that being asked meant that no litigation hold had
22
   been communicated to him? That's what -- when he says he
23
   wasn't asked --
24
             MS. WILSON: I mean, I --
25
             THE COURT: It's a fair implication, I guess.
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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
2
   So tell me -- okay, so the theory is that he was never
3
   told anything prior to February 2019 about these notes?
             MS. WILSON: Yes, that's correct.
 4
             THE COURT: Okay. So that would have to include
5
6
   a litigation hold at least made it to his attention.
7
             So, I mean, let me just ask you: Is there a
8
   litigation hold? Is that a thing or not? To use the
9
   modern parlance.
10
             MS. WILSON:
                          I mean, I think that in this
11
   particular matter I'm not sure that a hold was issued,
12
   certainly not with respect to Detective Fernandez's notes,
13
   which is the subject that we're speaking about today and
14
   which is the subject of any type of a spoliation sanction
15
   or a potential spoliation motion for sanctions.
             THE COURT: Does that mean that the -- I don't
16
17
   know, here's what I'm wondering. I mean, if you have
   some -- I quess two things -- if you have some practice of
18
19
   issuing a litigation hold and that for some reason it
20
   didn't happen in this case, I think they should know about
21
        Can you address that question further? Maybe not now
22
   but through an affidavit. Do you understand what I'm
23
   getting at? Because if you have a normal case, then the
24
   question becomes why -- you would need some explanation of
25
   why it didn't happen in this case.
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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
                                                       11
 2
             MS. WILSON:
                          Well, your Honor --
 3
             THE COURT: That's the first thing.
             And then the second thing is -- maybe we've
 4
 5
    answered -- but if there was a litigation hold given to
 6
    someone who is a superior, I guess, and the someone says,
 7
    "Oh, you know what, yeah, we got this notice from the law
 8
    department, but I don't want anyone finding out about this
 9
    incident, so I'm not going to communicate to any of my
10
    underlings that I got a litigation hold; hopefully, all
    the documents will get destroyed," it might be relevant
11
12
    for that purpose. So that seems to be relevant. And
13
   maybe we could just have a supplement as to the
14
    litigation -- it seems to me maybe we do need a supplement
15
    as to at least anything that would have preserved these
16
    notes.
17
             MS. WILSON: Would that be, for example, a
18
    supplement regarding whether those notes were ever
19
    requested prior to February 2019?
20
             THE COURT: In any form, including -- well,
    remember I said two things. One is, you know, is it the
21
22
    usual practice to have a directive that might have saved
23
    these notes; who does it; and if it wasn't done here, why
24
    wasn't it done; and if it was done, why didn't it get
25
    communicated to Fernandez?
```

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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
2
             MS. WILSON:
                          Well, I would point out that
3
   Detective Fernandez did state that it is his general
4
   practice, as I believe it is the general practice of other
   investigators in the NYPD, to retain their notes due to,
5
6
   for example, their obligations under People v. Rosario.
7
   He does say that it was his practice to maintain notes
8
   that he took in this case.
                                So --
9
             THE COURT: But that's not answering my
10
   question, really.
11
             So tell me what the objection is to giving an
12
   affidavit from somebody that says -- and maybe it's two
13
   people; maybe it's from you and someone else -- that just
14
   says, "Here's our practice for calling a litigation hold
15
   in a case like this insofar as it would have reached the
16
   notes that Fernandez took." And then you'll either say
17
   well, we did or we didn't do it. And if you didn't do it,
   you can explain why you didn't do it -- maybe someone
18
19
   forgot. If you did do it, you have to explain how it
20
   happened that that wasn't enough to cause him to be told
21
   prior to 2019 or somebody to be told to preserve these
22
   notes. Do you understand?
23
             MS. WILSON: Yes, I do, your Honor.
24
             Would this only be with respect to the limited
25
   issue of Fernandez's notes, given that Fernandez's notes
```

```
1
                          PROCEEDINGS
                                                      13
2
   are the only --
3
             THE COURT: That's the only spoliation issue,
4
   right?
           That's the only thing that got spoliated right?
5
             MR. LEVENTHAL: It is the only thing that got
6
   spoliated, Judge. But we do argue that the failure to
7
   timely disclose the radio transmissions resulted from the
8
   failure to preserve the original copy of the radio
9
   transmission. If they would have been preserved through a
10
   preservation hold, then we believe they would have been
11
   turned over timely.
12
             THE COURT: Right. But that's not spoliation; I
13
   mean, that's delay. I think you have what you need on
14
   delay, so I'm not going to -- you know, the delay is the
15
   delav.
16
             MR. LEVENTHAL: So, yes, Judge, then it is just
17
   the notes. But it's strange to us that the City's trying
18
   to talk about just preservation of notes. Clearly, the
19
   City's not just preserving Detective Javier Fernandez's
20
   notes if they're doing any type of preservation after the
21
   Notice of Claim was filed.
22
             THE COURT: I strongly doubt that, if there is a
23
   preservation notes, it's as to the notes; I agree.
24
   doubt we're going to find that out. But to the extent
25
   that they do two notice -- you know, a preservation notice
```

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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
 2
   as to something totally different that wouldn't have
    covered the notes, I just don't want to go down that road.
 3
             So, anyway, you've answered my questions, the
 4
           So when can we get such an affidavit or
 5
   notes.
 6
    affidavits?
 7
             MS. WILSON: Would two weeks be all right, your
 8
    Honor?
 9
             THE COURT: Well, these people are all primed up
10
    right now, aren't they? How about a week? Do you want to
    try for week, and if you can't do it, you'll tell me why
11
12
    and then we'll see where we are?
13
             MS. WILSON: All right. Thank you, your Honor.
14
             THE COURT: You look skeptical.
15
             I'm hopeful. May 6.
16
             Okay, hopefully, that's going to be the end of
17
         I think I've now ruled on what you've asked me to
             Is there anything else you think we need to do
18
    rule on.
19
    today?
20
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Well, Judge, the other part of
21
    it, the collection, are we just proceeding with the fact
22
    that they have not done anything else -- so, in other
23
    words, it appears to us that what the City is saying is
24
    the NYPD did not conduct any independent investigation
25
    into their files to turn over any relevant discovery
```

1 PROCEEDINGS 2 That's what the affidavit seemed to read to me. when we broached this topic with Ms. Wilson and asked her 3 to confirm or stipulate that this is everything the NYPD 4 has done, the City refused to do that. 5 6 THE COURT: I think I'll get her to say right 7 now are there any other efforts that were made to collect 8 with respect to the matters that are described in these affidavits other than what's described in the affidavits? 9 10 MS. WILSON: As to the matters described in the 11 affidavits -- and I just want to make it clear that that 12 is what we are speaking about -- these are the collection 13 efforts that were made with respect to those documents. 14 THE COURT: Okay. 15 MR. LEVENTHAL: And the way they're parsing this 16 out is a concern because we would think, from our side, 17 that when this lawsuit comes in, the attorneys would send 18 over some type of general memo to the NYPD, "We've 19 received litigation, there's litigation regarding death on 20 this date; please collect all documents." The City is 21 really focusing on specific requests for specific 22 documents. So --23 THE COURT: I didn't think we were down a road 24 which is the road one might take, you know, in the middle 25 of discovery to, you know, ask, you know, have we done

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1
                                                      16
                          PROCEEDINGS
2
   everything possible to collect all our documents. I
3
   understood we were down a road where we're trying to deal
   with spoliation and we're trying to deal with why there
4
   was a delay in producing something. But what you're
5
6
   talking about, I just don't think it's worth delaying this
7
   case even further to now go through the whole process of
   what was done for collection.
8
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Well, no, Judge, we don't want
9
10
   the whole process of what was done for collection.
11
   quess what we just want answered is whether the NYPD did
12
   anything on their own to locate any documents discoverable
13
   for this case or if they simply relied on their attorneys
14
   to request documents. It appears from the affidavits --
15
             THE COURT: But, I mean, I'm sympathetic to the
16
   City's view. This is one process. You know, it's --
17
   that's the way document production works. So pretend it's
   a corporation. The lawyer goes to the corporation and
18
19
   says, "What have you got? I want you to do this, want you
20
   to do that." There's a collaborative effort, and then
21
   it's produced. And people don't come in and say, "Okay,
22
   corporation, what did you do independent of the attorney
23
   to collect these documents?" That's not a road I've
24
   normally gone down.
25
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Well, and that's how we see it,
```

1 PROCEEDINGS 2 that there would have been some collaboration between the 3 two to locate documents. What the City is saying now, apparently, is that there was no collaboration until 4 December of 2018, when Judge Castel ordered an affidavit 5 6 on the destruction of evidence. And then all of a sudden, 7 the NYPD began collaborating with their attorneys and 8 figured out, Hey, there are these other documents out 9 there that we don't seem to have ever collected or turned 10 over. So if that's the case, we just want to know that 11 those are the facts, that the NYPD simply provided --12 prior to December of 2018, the NYPD simply provided its 13 attorneys with what its attorneys asked for. 14 THE COURT: Well, I think Ms. Wilson has 15 described what she did to collect documents, and I assume 16 this is the whole story. 17 So, Ms. Wilson, I think the parsing is not as nefarious as you think. We ask questions about what would 18 19 lead to the collection of the tapes and the notes and 20 whatever the investigator files, whatever that was. And 21 there's a broader story that goes with it, which she 22 describes. And then we get to how we ended up just with 23 these documents. That's the whole story. Ms. Wilson, I 24 assume that's the whole story as to these documents; is 25 that right?

```
1
                          PROCEEDINGS
2
             MS. WILSON: Yes, that's correct, your Honor.
 3
             And I would just note that whether there are
4
   efforts to collect documents that were timely produced
5
   really has very little bearing on our efforts to -- on
6
   whether or not it's sanctionable that we produced
7
   documents late, as well.
8
             THE COURT: So you're going to make your
9
   motions.
             And if they come up with new facts that aren't
10
   in here, someone's got to come back to me. We'll deal
11
   with it. I mean, I can't believe it's going to happen.
12
   But this is now your set of facts, and it will rise and
   fall -- or their position and your position will rise and
13
14
   fall on those.
15
             Mr. Leventhal, anything else?
16
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Judge, the last point is just
17
   that the declarations indicate that Ms. Wilson requested
   the 44th Precinct Detective Squad file from the NYPD. And
18
19
   there's no explanation of why the NYPD did not produce it.
20
   Ms. Wilson indicates that she didn't follow up on it,
21
   but --
22
             THE COURT: You want to figure out why they
23
   didn't produce it?
24
             MR. LEVENTHAL: It was requested, and they didn't
25
   produce it. So there's no facts as to why that was not
```

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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
2
   produced by the NYPD in response to the attorney's
3
   request.
 4
             THE COURT: Okay. So, Ms. Wilson, you asked, if
   I recall from your affidavit, you asked someone to produce
5
6
   that file, and it didn't happen. And you then followed up
7
   a long time later, is that right?
8
             MS. WILSON: Well, your Honor, first I would note
9
   that we -- just to be very clear -- we didn't request the
10
   Detective Squad file; we requested any DD-5s -- those are
   complaint follow-up reports -- related to this incident
11
12
   from the squad --
13
             THE COURT: And do you think that would not have
14
   been understood to include notes, is that your point?
15
             MS. WILSON: No. I'm just making clear that we
16
   didn't actually request the file itself.
17
             Additionally, the reason that --
18
             THE COURT: No, but why is that important?
                                                          I'm
19
           Is that --
   sorry.
20
             MS. WILSON: Because, while they're similar,
21
   they're not exactly -- they're not exactly the same thing.
22
             THE COURT: Okay, did they produce the DD-5s
23
   timely?
24
             MS. WILSON: No, they did not, your Honor.
25
             THE COURT: Okay. All right. So --
```

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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
                                                       20
 2
             MS. WILSON: But I just wanted to make that
            It's a small distinction, but it is a distinction.
 3
    clear.
 4
             Additionally, as we told plaintiff's counsel on
 5
    the phone, the individual who was handling processing
 6
    these requests at NYPD has since retired. And I think
 7
    that any information that we would be providing --
 8
             THE COURT: So the person you asked from is not
 9
    working at the NYPD?
10
             MS. WILSON:
                          That's correct, your Honor.
11
             And I think that, if anything, it would be --
12
    any explanation for why the DD-5s were not produced to us
13
    would be entirely speculative.
14
             THE COURT: Well, not if you could find that
15
   person.
16
             MS. WILSON: Well, I'm not certain that she would
17
   be able to recall the specific document that she requested
    six years ago. And, you know, the fact of the matter is
18
19
    that I failed to follow up on those --
20
             THE COURT: Well, they also failed to produce
21
        Is that a common occurrence?
22
             MS. WILSON:
                          And --
23
             THE COURT: Ms. Wilson?
24
             MS. WILSON: I'm sorry?
25
             THE COURT:
                         They also failed to produce it.
                                                           Is
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1
                          PROCEEDINGS
                                                       21
2
   that a common occurrence?
3
             MS. WILSON: I can't really speak to that.
             But, regardless, I would say that the -- that it
 4
5
   would really be speculation as to why we didn't receive
6
   that document. And, you know, again, the fact of the
7
   matter is that it was not timely produced. And I think
8
   that that's really all that plaintiff --
9
             THE COURT: So this ultimately was produced?
10
             MS. WILSON: Oh, yes, yes, it was.
11
             THE COURT: All right, I mean, Mr. Leventhal, the
12
   difference -- I mean, I think we've reached a realm that,
13
   you know, your motion, the important part of your motion
14
   is that you had to wait three years and the Court had to
15
   wait three years. And I think -- I agree that trying to
16
   find this retired person is not a fruitful road as just a
17
   matter of proportionality to your needs. So I think we're
18
   going to leave it at that, Mr. Leventhal.
19
             MR. LEVENTHAL: May I, your Honor?
20
             THE COURT: Certainly.
21
             MR. LEVENTHAL: I agree, Judge, that trying to
22
   find this person would be a waste of time and energy. But
23
   we would think that there would be some type of systems or
24
   records in place to show us what happened to this request;
25
   or if there was no system or records in place with these
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                                                       22
                          PROCEEDINGS
 2
    requests from the law department --
 3
             THE COURT: But -- okay, your best-case scenario
    is -- I'm not sure what your best-case scenario is, but
 4
 5
   based upon what we have so far, a request is made. Maybe
 6
    there's some log that says Ms. Wilson asked for this, and
 7
    then there's a blank to the right that says no one ever
 8
    followed up on it. I mean, I'm just trying to figure out
 9
    what that gets you that's any more important than the fact
10
    that it took three years for them to get it to you.
11
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Well, we just don't know if the
12
    system is not an appropriate system to deal with these
13
    requests, if they don't have any record-keeping or check
14
    or balance to make sure that they follow up on these
15
    requests. You know --
16
             THE COURT: So you want to know what the system
17
    was?
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Or any records or documents
18
19
    showing what happened to this request, why it was not
20
    fulfilled.
21
             THE COURT: And how is it going to help you,
22
   beyond the fact that it was three years late, to know
23
    that?
24
             MR. LEVENTHAL: I think it could rise from a
25
   negligent situation to a gross negligence to a
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1
                                                       23
                          PROCEEDINGS
 2
   willfulness.
 3
             THE COURT: Okay, but, again, we're not in this
 4
    spoliation land. This was not spoliated evidence, as I
 5
    understand it. This is stuff you got.
 6
             MR. LEVENTHAL:
                            Well, maybe the --
 7
             THE COURT: I'm not sure -- I understand those
 8
    levels for spoliation, but not for just these people
 9
    delayed me for three years.
10
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Then it's a matter -- yes, Judge,
11
    under Rule 37, it's still their explanation as to what the
12
    reason for the delay is is still something that needs to
13
   be analyzed. And if the explanation is that we requested
14
    it -- our attorneys requested it, and we didn't have any
15
    system in place to deal with these attorney requests
16
    properly, I think that might be not nearly as good an
17
    explanation as to 99 out of 100 times we fulfill these
18
    requests, and this is the one that slipped through the
19
    cracks.
20
             THE COURT: Ms. Wilson?
21
             MS. WILSON: Your Honor, I would just point out
22
    that, again, we're in the realm of discussing a late
   production rather than a spoliation issue. To that, I
23
24
    think that both plaintiff acknowledges and certainly we
25
   would agree that it is defendants' burden to argue
```

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1
                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
    substantial justification, which I think would encompass
 3
    these kind of --
 4
             THE COURT: I'm sorry, what --
             MS. WILSON: Substantial justification for the
 5
 6
    delay in our production. So to the extent that we're
 7
    arguing that the steps that we took were reasonable and
 8
    harmless, it's on defendants to argue it. And I don't
 9
    think that it's really necessary to begin to reach the
10
    specifics of why this request wasn't fulfilled at the
11
    time, given that no one disagrees that it wasn't fulfilled
12
    at the time and that I as the attorney for the law
13
    department did not follow up on it.
14
             THE COURT: I mean, I'm of two minds. I mean, I
15
    think there -- unless you're prepared to concede that there
16
    was, you know, no system in place, which I suspect you're
17
    not, then --
             MS. WILSON: Your Honor --
18
19
             THE COURT: Go ahead.
20
             MS. WILSON: I mean, I'm just not sure what saying
21
    something like, for example, as you said, saying something
22
    like, "Ms. Wilson made this request. It was received and
23
    logged. No response was ever received, " I'm not sure how
24
    that --
25
             THE COURT: So but I think it would be different
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                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
   if in fact there is no log system. And that would show
 3
    kind of a greater degree of negligence if in fact the
   precinct takes calls and then they just hope they remember
 4
    at the end of the month which calls came in, as opposed to,
 5
 6
    you know, having a system that writes it down and makes
 7
    sure it gets responded to. That's the difference.
 8
             MS. WILSON: But I don't think that that's really
    sort of what's at issue here. I think what's at issue here
 9
10
    is just the late production of these specific documents --
11
             THE COURT: Well, if you're willing to concede
12
    that the failure to produce it was the result of, you know,
13
    whatever -- I don't think there's any theory on which it's
14
    going to be intentional but was, you know, grossly
15
    negligent -- and they're free to argue that. I don't think
16
    you want to do that. They want to be able to say that.
17
    They want to be able to say there was no system -- they're
18
    hoping, maybe -- there was no system in place, and it was
19
    not reasonable to have a system where the attorney has to,
    once they make their request, is expected to remember or
20
21
    follow up on every single request they make, and that was
22
    quaranteed to lead to delays. They want to be able to make
23
    that argument.
24
             So if you have a system that at least logs it and
25
    someone back at the precinct is supposed to respond to it
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                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
   within X number of days, if there is such a system, it
 3
    doesn't seem very burdensome if there's someone there now
    to describe what the system was. And if there wasn't a
 4
    system, I think they probably should know about it. So I
 5
 6
    understand that one's a little harder.
 7
             Why don't I give you to the end of next week on
 8
    that one, May 10? But someone -- if there is a
 9
    "someone" -- should describe what the system was for
10
    dealing with a request of the kind that you made at the
11
    time. And if there's any explanation for why it didn't
12
    happen here, great. It sounds like there won't be, since
13
    we don't have the particular person involved. I think
14
    these are very limited areas, and they should not be hard
    to produce an affidavit on them.
15
16
             Okay, so do you understand the requests,
   Ms. Wilson -- the direction, Ms. Wilson?
17
18
             MS. WILSON: I would appreciate it if the Court
19
    could just give me specific instructions as to both.
20
             THE COURT: Well, the first one, hopefully it's
21
    in the record. The one we just did -- well, you don't say
22
    in paragraph 25 when you made this request, because I was
    about to say at the time you made the request -- do you
23
24
    know when you made the request?
25
             MS. WILSON: The request was made in, I believe,
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                           PROCEEDINGS
 2
    the very end of June 2015 or the very beginning of July
 3
    2015.
             THE COURT: Oh, it's the incident in July 2015 --
 4
    I'm sorry, I thought it said "of July 2015." Okay, so it's
 5
 6
    July 2015.
 7
             So as of -- which what I need is an affidavit that
 8
    describes as of July 2015 what the process was in the 44th
 9
    Precinct's Detective Squad -- if that's who you asked -- or
10
    whoever it was you did ask -- what the process was for
11
    responding to requests of that kind.
12
             MS. WILSON: As described by Ms. Daitz's
13
    affidavit, the requests made by the law department go
14
    through the civil litigation unit.
15
             THE COURT: So that's who you requested?
16
             MS. WILSON: Yes, that's correct, your Honor.
17
             THE COURT:
                          Okay. And do we have a description
18
    of what process they used? Is that what we're missing?
19
    They have a lot of generic language. I think we need
20
    something specific as to what the process was to
21
    communicate that or to get it from the 44th Precinct and,
22
    you know, whether there's a record of it; you know, just
23
    take us through the process. Okay. Understood?
24
             MS. WILSON: Yes. Thank you, your Honor.
25
             MR. LEVENTHAL: May I, your Honor?
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1
                           PROCEEDINGS
                                                        28
 2
             THE COURT:
                          Sure.
 3
             MR. LEVENTHAL: And what they did in this
 4
   particular case, as well.
 5
             THE COURT: Yes. And if you have anything
 6
    information in this particular case, definitely put that
 7
    in. But even if you don't, what the normal process is.
             Okay, Mr. Leventhal, anything else for today?
 8
             MR. LEVENTHAL: One moment, Judge?
 9
10
             THE COURT: Sure.
11
             MR. LEVENTHAL: Nothing further. Thank you,
12
    Judge.
13
             THE COURT: Anything from the City?
14
             MS. WILSON: Nothing further, your Honor.
15
             THE COURT: All right. Thank you, everyone.
16
             (Whereupon, the matter is adjourned.)
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 3
                      <u>C E R T I F I C A T E</u>
 4
 5
              I, Carole Ludwig, certify that the foregoing
 6
    transcript of proceedings in the case of Brown et al v. The
    City of New York et al, Docket #15-cv-04091-PKC-GWG, was
 7
8
    prepared using digital transcription software and is a true
 9
    and accurate record of the proceedings.
10
11
12
               Carole Ludwig
    Signature
13
                    Carole Ludwig
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    Date: May 1, 2019
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